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12 1980
VOLUME 19
DECEMBER

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Felici Photographers

2 *SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAMILY: Here a married couple, auditors at the Synod, give a presentation of the message which the Bishops wrote to the families of the world.*

6 *OCTOBER 12TH: At the halfway point of the Synod, the Day of the Family was planned as a day of prayer and testimony. Families from all over the world participated in the Mass celebrated by the Pope in the morning and in the program of the afternoon.*

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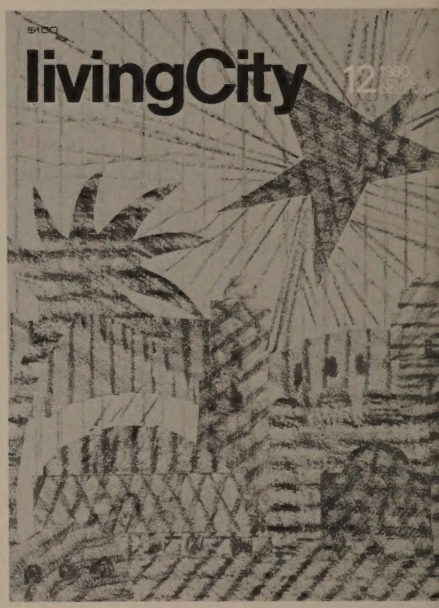

COVER: Christmas night

Living City is published 11 times a year (10 monthly and a bimonthly issue in August-September) by the Focolare Movement, a non-profit corporation, P. O. Box 496, New York, NY 10021. •
Subscription prices for one year: USA and possessions: US$10.00; Canada: US$12.00; Elsewhere: US$18.00; Air Mail (all countries): US$25.00. •
An envelope is enclosed in each magazine for subscriptions or renewals. Use this address for subscription orders and inquiries: LIVING CITY, P. O. Box 126, Jamaica, NY 11415. •
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ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA: On the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the death of St. Catherine, we would like to offer our readers a brief glimpse of the life of this extraordinary saint.

Maria Caampued

14 *GOD WITH US: "If Christmas reminds us to what extent God has loved us, it is easy to understand how the logic of his love makes him always want to be a partner in our doings, and desirous to live, in a certain way, among us.*

22 *SCIENCE: Our universe is expanding constantly making the "measurement" of distances in certain extreme situations almost impossible.*

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1. "Ciudad Nueva" - Av. da Rivadavia 4939 - Buenos Aires 24 - Argentina
2. "Ciudad Nueva" - Ferrer del Rio - 1 esc A, 2º 5ª Madrid - Spain

OTHER ENGLISH EDITIONS:
1. "New City" - 57 Twyford Avenue - London W3 - England
2. "New City" - P. O. Box 332 - Manila, Philippines
3. "New City" - 367 Balwyn Rd. - Balwyn North 3104 - Australia

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAMILY

Much is being said these days about the crisis that the family is going through. Instead, the Synod of Bishops has affirmed the family's rightful place at the center of the renewal of humanity, proposing once again to the married people of today, the "scandal" of the gospel.

by Mariele and Pino Quartana

On October 25, 1980, the work of the Fifth Synod of Bishops on "The Role of the Christian Family in Today's World," was concluded. The Fathers of the Synod presented the Pope with a detailed document which the Holy Father himself will make public after having examined it in depth. However, he has already underlined some fundamental points of it in his concluding homily. We will come back to it and to the proposals of the document when they will be made public. At the moment, we will limit ourselves to a presentation of a few passages of the Bishops' message to the families of the world. The presentation has been prepared by Mariele and Pino Quartana, contributing editors of our Italian magazine, Citta Nuova, who participated in the Synod as auditors.

Much was expected from this Synod, and the expectations were quite different, at times, even contrasting. Many desired a clarification and a deeper theological explanation of marriage and family life. The need was felt for an authoritative word from the Church. which would defend the rights of families, especially those who are poor, alienated or oppressed by unjust economic systems or dictatorial governments. There were many difficult issues to face such as inculturation (that is how to present the Christian model of marriage in the context of ancient cultural situations); the role of women, and the full appreciation of their contribution within the family, and in the Church and social communities; the problem of mixed marriages, etc.

There were also the expectations of many married couples living in irregular situations (like re-married divorced persons) or of others who have not understood or accepted the moral teaching of the Church. They were hoping for some kind of revision of the doctrinal principles regarding the indissolubility of the sacrament of matrimony and of the way of living responsible parenthood. The mass media seemed to emphasize especially these aspects.

The Bishops who were to study in depth the tasks of the Christian family in our times, had to question its identity. And they did so by looking at the "signs of the times," but without letting themselves be influenced by public opinion and current trends in life styles. They turned to the words of Christ and to the doctrine of the Church as it has developed over the centuries in the light of the gospel. They proposed this doctrine again, with courage, applying it to the situation of today's world. Naturally, those who were awaiting big changes towards a more permissive interpretation of the Church's doctrine were disappointed. They would not have liked to hear certain, unchangeable principles being reaffirmed, such as the indissolubility of marriage, and the moral teaching of the Church, which is expressed in a particular way in the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae." Instead, this is exactly what the Synod did, and the Pope as well in his homily at the closing of the Synod.

Unfortunately, the conclusions reached by the Synod have been judged and interpreted by much of the mass media in light of these unfulfilled expectations, risking therefore, to publicize, and most likely with a negative overtone, only some answers. Important directives might then remain overlooked, regarding the life of the family, the defense of its dignity and rights, and its spiritual growth in love and service to others.

The Bishops' message, for example, praised and encouraged the efforts of those families who try to live in conformity with their faith, despite the difficulties posed by modern life. It emphasized a positive and consoling fact: "*The number of families who consciously want to live the life of the Gospel . . . continues to grow in all our lands.*"

The message also expressed a clear position in defense of those families "*. . .who live in need in a world of such great wealth . . .*" It went on to point out the grave problem caused by governments, and some international organizations, who do real violence to families in regard to fundamental rights, like the right to religious freedom, to responsible parenthood and education. These families "*. . . regard themselves as wards and victims rather than as human beings responsible for their own affairs. Families are compelled — and this we oppose vehemently — to use such immoral means for the solution of social, economic, and demographic problems as contraception or, even worse, sterilization, abortion, and euthanasia. The Synod therefore strongly urges a charter of family rights to safeguard these rights everywhere.*"

But the Fathers of the Synod called to mind also that there is another kind of poverty: a spiritual emptiness, a misery of mind and heart which, though at times in the

midst of an abundance of material goods, empties life of its meaning, destroys real love, making it difficult to live marriage according to God's plan.

A good part of the message was dedicated to God's plan for marriage and the family.

"God's eternal plan (cf. Eph.1:3) is that all men and women should participate and share in the divine life and being. The Father summons people to realize this plan in union with their fellow human beings, thus forming the People of God.

"In a special way the family is called to carry out this divine plan. It is, as it were, the first cell of the Church, helping its members to become agents of the history of salvation and living signs of God's loving plan for the world . . ." But this plan *". . . can only be fully understood, accepted, and lived by persons who have experienced conversion of heart, that radical turning of the self to God by which one puts off the 'old' self and puts on the 'new.'*

"All are called to conversion and sanctity. We must all come to the knowledge and love of the Lord and experience Him in our lives, rejoicing in His love and mercy, His patience, compassion, and forgiveness and loving one another as He loves us."

We Christian families felt that on this profound spiritual foundation, we could live up to our vocation and accomplish the difficult tasks which have been entrusted to us. The first of these is the upbringing and education of the coming generations, since, *". . . The more Christian the family becomes, the more human it becomes."* On a larger scale, we can then carry on the task of evangelization.

In fact the Bishops wrote: *". . . the outlook of the Christian family should not be narrow and confined only to the parish, it should embrace the whole human family. Within the larger community it has a duty to give witness to Christian values. It should foster social justice and relief of the poor and oppressed. Family organizations should be encouraged to protect their rights by opposing unjust social structures and public policies which harm the family. Such organizations should also exercise a healthy influence on the communications media and build up social solidarity."*

The message seemed to us to be particularly interesting when it spoke of family movements and encouraged those organizations *". . . whose purpose is to help other married couples and families appreciate God's plan and live by it. This like-to-like ministry should be encouraged as part of comprehensive family ministry."*

The Christian family must also have the courage to go against the current mentality: *"Today the family is sometimes obliged to choose a way of life that goes contrary to modern culture in such matters as sexuality, individual autonomy and material wealth."* The message of the Bishops and the closing homily of the Pope both affirmed that, in the Christian family, the woman must be guaranteed the possibility to fulfill her role as she chooses: *"Husband and wife are certainly different, but they are also equal. The difference should be respected but never used to justify the domination of one by the other . . ."*

Nearing the end of the message, the Bishops stated: *"In no way do we ignore the very difficult and trying situation of the many Christian couples who, although they sincerely want to observe the moral norms taught by the Church, find themselves unequal to the task because of weakness in the face of difficulties . . ."* But they should not get discouraged. Going back to the words of Pope Paul VI, the Fathers of the Synod affirmed: *"The awareness that one has not achieved his full interior liberty and is still at the mercy of his tendencies and finds himself unable to obey the*

The Hall of the Synod. 216 Cardinals and Bishops were present with the Pope who attended all the sessions of the Synod.

moral law in an area so basic, causes deep distress. But this is the moment in which the Christian, rather than giving way to sterile and destructive panic, humbly opens up his soul before God as a sinner before the saving love of Christ."[1]

In conclusion, they wrote: *"Everything we have said about marriage and the family can be summed up in two words: love and life."*

This is the call which we families must answer. As Pope John Paul II said, the Christian family must take its place again. And this will happen if *"love and life"* are present in the family, in as much as its members live charity, defined by the Holy Father in his concluding remarks as *". . . the heart of the family."* However, *". . . no one can do charity other than in truth,"* that is, in conformity with the words of Christ, convinced that they can save us and make us better men and women, notwithstanding our weaknesses and limitations.

married couples at the synod

An interesting innovation in this Fifth Synod of Bishops, was undoubtedly the participation of lay people, in particular married couples. They were invited as experts or "auditors." In his opening talk, the Holy Father said: *". . .although the Synodal assembly is by its nature a particular form of activity of the Episcopal College, within this Assembly we feel the need for the presence and the testimonies of our dear brothers and sisters who represent the Christian families of the world."* And he then added: *"It is really necessary at the time of this assembly, whose theme is the Christian family and its role, to have the presence and testimony of those whose gifts, according to the grace given them, are the gifts of life and of vocation to marriage and family life.*

". . . we will be grateful to you if during the work of this Synod . . . you would share with us these gifts of your condition and your vocation . . . through the testimony of your presence and your experience. . . "

Who were these couples? Why had they been chosen, and by whom?

The Vatican Committee for the Family was responsible for choosing the auditors, and, as the vice-President of the Committee, Archbishop Majdansky said, some auditors were people well-known for their commitment and preparation (at times also scientific) in the field of family ministry, while others represented large international movements from all over the world.

Annamaria and Danilo Zanzucchi, who — together with the Quartana's — are responsible for the "New Families" of the Focolare Movement.

The presence of lay people, and especially married couples, was really an important aspect of this Synod. Undoubtedly ever since the Second Vatican Council, the role of the laity has assumed a new importance, yet this Synod represented something entirely new in this regard. Never before, in the four preceding Synods, had something similar happened. Also because the lay participants did not only listen. In the "circuli minores" (the work groups) which had an important role in the work of the Synod itself, their presence and opinion was greatly appreciated.

There were three moments of particular importance: the occasions when, in the presence of the Pope and all the Bishops, auditors, priests, and religious working in the field of family ministry (Mother Theresa of Calcutta for example), but especially married couples, were able to offer the fruits of their family apostolate and the testimony of their experience in daily life.

We will not mention here the Day of the Family, October 12th, (see page 6) which emphasized the vitality of the Christian family in the world. All the talks given by the married couples demonstrated that also today, in the most various and difficult situations, it is possible to live Christianity authentically and build one's life on the gospel.

Many Bishops stated that they had seen it as a comforting sign of hope for the future of the family. It reinforced what the Pope had said in his opening address, namely that the family can and must be, not only *". . . the fundamental object of the Church's evangelization and cathechesis, but also the necessary subject for which nothing else can be substituted: the creative subject."*

Here we see some of the couples who participated in the Synod as auditors. They came from many countries all over the world. The days spent together gave them the possibility to get to know one another, to share their experiences and to appreciate the contribution that each one gives to the development of the Christian family. They now want to keep in contact and collaborate so that their work at the service of the Church will be more efficacious.

Many of the couples in turn said that it had been a tremendous spiritual enrichment for them to participate in this Synod. It opened their horizons to see the vast panorama of the family in the world, especially during the first days of the Synod, when the Bishops, representing the different Episcopal Conferences, presented the situation in each of their own countries — from Haiti to the Philippines, from Japan to the United States, from South America to Africa, from the Middle East to India. They found themselves coming in close contact with many different cultural and social realities, and were able to participate in a living way in the problems of a large part of humanity.

Since they were together with Bishops from all over the world, who were meeting with the Pope for an entire month to discuss the topic of the family, they were able to experience first-hand what is meant by collegiality, and appreciate the attitude with which the Bishops listened to one another.

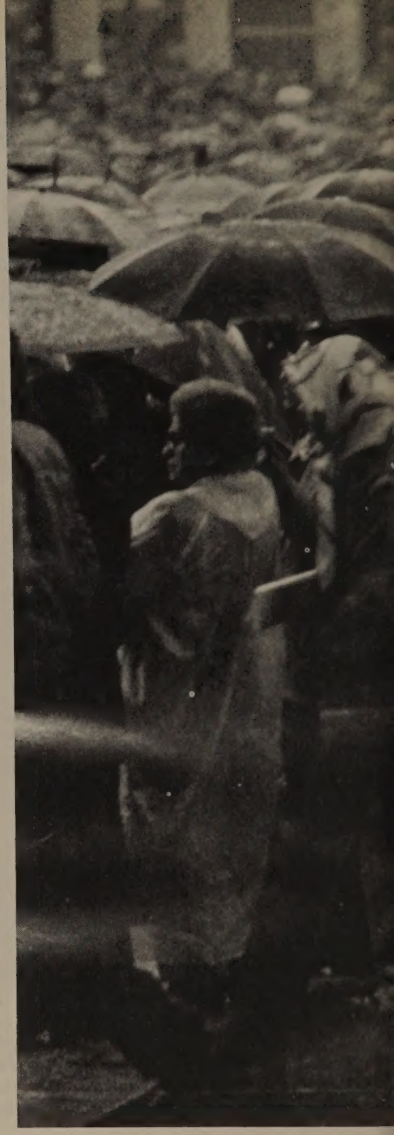
A moment which was particularly important for all the auditors was when they met the Holy Father personally. He invited them in small groups to participate in his Mass in his private chapel, and afterwards to have breakfast with him. The simple and family-like atmosphere, the possibility for a deeper contact with the Pope and the cordial, relaxed conversation, will remain in the hearts of all as one of the most beautiful experiences of the entire Synod.

●

1) Pope Paul VI, Address to the Movement "Equipes de Notre Dame," May 4, 1970.

Mr. and Mrs. Claude and Anne Lanctot, from Canada. Mr. Lanctot is the executive director of FIDAF-IFFLP (The International Federation of Family Life Promotion). His wife, a nurse, collaborates with him. They have four children.

Despite the rain, tens of thousands of people from all over the world participated in a Mass celebrated by the Pope, answering his call to pray together for the family in the world today.



OCTOBER 12th: the day of the family

by Rosanna Cantelmi

It was pouring rain, but the listeners were attentive and still beneath the unsteady roof of their umbrellas. Entire families, including married couples from thirty-seven different nations had gathered in St. Peter's Square on October 12, 1980 to assist at a Mass celebrated by the Pope. They numbered in the tens of thousands, notwithstanding the bad weather.

This day-long gathering sponsored by the Vatican Committee for the Family was actually much more than a meeting. It was taking place during a Synod which had been called for the precise purpose of discussing topics and problems relating to family life. It was a long-awaited occasion; a moment which had been desired and planned for quite some time. "This day is truly blessed in the course of the work of the actual Synod," confirmed the Pope that rainy morning, "If it were lacking, something essential and important would be missing."

The occasion was characterized by both simplicity and solemnity: there were children in hooded raincoats seated atop their parents' shoulders; young couples dressed in their native costumes; older couples shivering a bit in the cold. The seriousness of the event was perhaps most evident at the impressive moment during the Mass when all the couples present renewed their marriage vows.

"Renewing those promises was really a deep experience for me," one man told me afterwards, "maybe I had forgotten them; at any rate, I never thought about them any more, or rather, when I heard other couples pronounce them, I thought of them as mere words. Instead, today I realized that they have a real meaning; they have to be lived."

"It was beautiful for me, too," a young woman added. "It seemed to me that these promises were no longer between the husband and wife alone; they involved the whole Church. I felt that all of us present there were 'Church,' standing before the Vicar of Christ, renewing our 'yes'."

"All of us . . . were 'Church'." This was the striking characteristic of that day. It brought to mind the early Christian communities in which the relationship between the Apostles (whose modern-day successors are those very Bishops attending the Synod) and Christian families was dynamic and direct. The comparison is a valid one.

That same afternoon, 9,000 people crowded into the Paul VI Audience Hall where the meeting continued. A number of families were there to address Pope John Paul II and the whole Synod. Coming from all over the world — Asia, the United States, Latin America, and Europe, they spoke simply but with

deep conviction about their own experiences of family life. Their words bore witness to the fact that when Christianity is lived, it brings human love to its full maturity, liberating it, and strengthening it in times of suffering. The Pope, seated in the very first row, did not miss a word of what was said. In fact, he himself had said just a few hours earlier: "This day is truly extraordinary. Full of joy and hope. And how necessary this all is among the wrong ways and doubts, the way of the present times. How full it is of the sureness which derives from the Eternal Alliance."

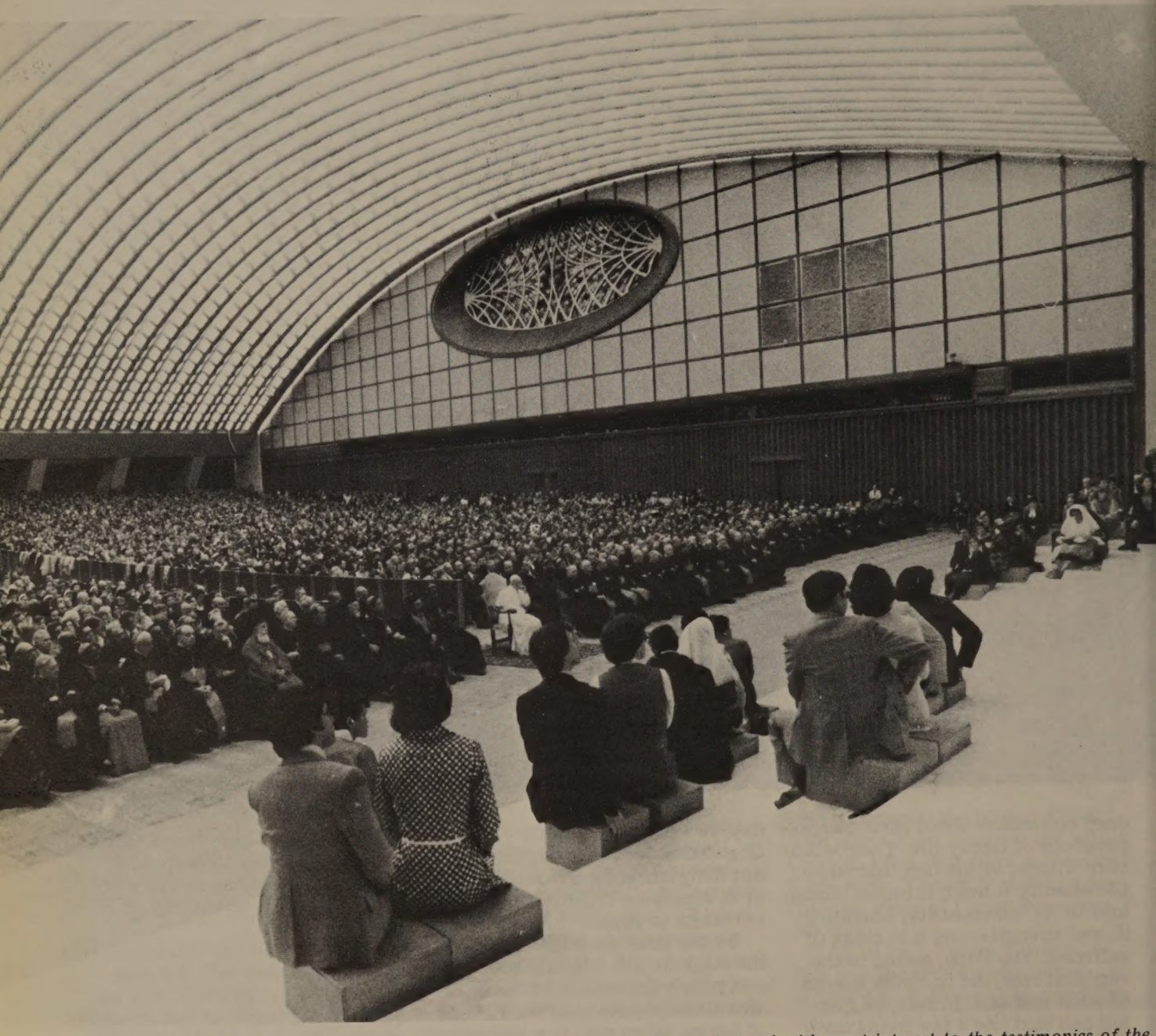
"Nowadays, one rarely speaks of 'certainty' and yet the experiences of these families did reveal a kind of certainty, in spite of the fact that they, too, are subject to the troubles of our times and are clearly not immune to the problems, questions and struggles which exist today. It was the "certainty" of Christian love, a love which does not deny suffering but rather sees in it, each time it comes, a new opportunity to love.

By the time the Pope mounted the stage to give a final greeting, everyone's impression of the day was already quite clear. It was one of having taken part in a key moment of recent Church history. "Let us bear witness to Christ before one another," the Pope had said earlier, at the time of the Angelus, and in this way "we will become reciprocal witnesses." We experienced this that very day.

"I'm returning home with new faith," a man seated next to me confided. "Seeing so many families who still believe and are serious about their commitment has given me confidence. Seeing that the Church is active and moving forward has also strengthened my faith. What we have heard here will help our families to overcome crises and problems and to share with others the possibility of living like this."

Yes. Because that afternoon, one could see clearly that it is truly possible to live like this. It is not just wishful thinking, not an anachronism. No. It is fulfillment, true human freedom. It is the possibility for family life, for society, therefore — for a different tomorrow.

I recorded one last impression on my way out the door: "This morning," the man told me, "I watched the people standing motionless in the pouring rain . . . This afternoon I listened to these experiences. I'm not at all religious, but I wanted to attend this just the same, and today, I discovered that there is something more to life. I want to try to live it and then to come back here next year with my wife."



In the Paul VI Audience Hall, the Pope and the Bishops of the Synod listened with great interest to the testimonies of the families. The preparation of this day-long program had been arranged by the Vatican Committee for the Family which was instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1973.

the families spoke

In the Paul VI Audience Hall, young couples in vividly colored native costumes stood by older couples on the steps leading up to the stage. Their children were close by, moving around a bit in the interim while the music of the Gen Rosso and Gen Verde international bands filled the hall.

At precisely 4:30, the bishops attending the Synod arrived, and with them came the Pope. It was immediately evident that he was very happy to be there, more than willing to listen.

What followed were real-life experiences shared by sixteen couples from all over the world. And one after the other, their words formed a splendid mosaic of contemporary Christian life: from an engaged couple from Portugal, to how a Korean husband and wife overcame the crisis caused by a lack of communication in their marriage, to a Polish family's commitment to a strong faith and their efforts to help

others. American and Dutch couples shared their discoveries of a marital relationship fully open to its life-giving potential.

Others told of their family's work to better society, of dramatic and trying situations such as the break-up of a marriage, the death of a spouse, drugs, war . . . And the impact of these experiences was deeply felt throughout the hall.

When the couples had finished speaking, the Pope remained seated for a few minutes before going up to deliver the closing remarks: "All of us have listened with deep emotion and gratitude in our souls to the words of those who wished to share here the witness of their lives . . . ," he said."One element that was present in all the different experiences related today was the awareness, apparent in everyone's words, that authentic love constitutes the key to solving all problems, even the most dramatic ones . . . a love stronger than death.

"However, human love is a fragile and ensnaring reality: everyone has acknowledged this either explicitly or implicitly. To survive without becoming sterile, it must transcend itself. Only a love which comes in contact with God can avoid the risk of falling by the wayside."

RESTORING CONFIDENCE

". . . first and foremost, I am anxious to say: it is necessary to restore confidence to Christian families. In the storm now raging over it, under indictment as it is, the Christian family is more and more tempted to give way to discouragement, to a lack of confidence in itself, and to fear. We must, therefore, tell it, with true and convincing words, that it has a mission and a place in the modern world and that, to carry out this task, it has formidable resources and lasting values.

"These values are above all of a spiritual and religious order: there is a sacrament, a 'sacramentum magnum,' at the root and at the base of the family, a sacrament which is a sign of the active presence of the Risen Christ within the family, just as it is also an inexhaustible source of grace.

"But these values are also of a natural order: to enlighten them when they are dimmed, to strengthen them when they are weakened, and to rekindle them when they are almost extinguished is a noble service rendered to humanity. These values are love, faithfulness, mutual help, indissolubility, fecundity in its fullest meaning, intimacy enriched by openness to others, the awareness of being the basic cell of society, etc.

"The family is the steward and privileged transmitter of these values. The Christian family is so in a new and special way. These values strengthen it in its being and make it dynamic and efficacious in the community as a whole at every level. But the family must believe in these values, it must proclaim them fearlessly and live them serenely, transmit them and spread them."

(Excerpt taken from the Holy Father's message to the families on Sunday, October 12th, in the Paul VI Audience Hall.)

Rose and Paul Heo from Korea

Paul:"From the time we were engaged, we both put more emphasis on spiritual values than on material ones such as a dowry, gifts, and other things which are customary in our country. Rose was a Christian, whereas I was not; but as I got to know the gospel better, I decided that I, too, wanted to be baptized."

Rose:"At the beginning of our married life, we managed to communicate everything, especially spiritual things to each other, because we loved one another so much. As the years went by, though, it got harder and harder to do so and we slowly found ourselves virtually silent. We weren't talking to each other any more. Paul would return home from work and close himself up in one room while I worked around the house on my own, with the children.

"We disagreed with one another frequently. Naturally, our conjugal relations were not going well either, especially as far as I was concerned. I knew well how important they are to married life, because through matrimony, we had become one flesh. But precisely because I felt that they involved something sacred, I also felt that before all else, we had to be in agreement — in harmony and unity regarding everything else.

"On the other hand, Paul felt that if our conjugal relations were going well, this could be a basis for a deeper union in other areas as well.

As a result, we no longer had any contact with one another and there ensued a very difficult period of time during which we both suffered greatly. Our life together no longer had any meaning. At a certain point, I thought of Jesus. Even he, who is God, had experienced darkness on the cross; but he hadn't remained in that darkness. He accepted it, transformed it into love and rose from the dead. This thought brought peace to my heart, but at the same time, I felt I had to change everything.

"I asked myself if I had truly listened to my husband, or if I hadn't done it for fear of losing my own ideas. Then that same night, I prepared him a special meal; I was ready to begin all over again. When he came home from work and began to talk to me, I tried to listen to him the best I could. We talked all through the night, and we opened our hearts for one another."

The Belcher's from the United States

Rose: "We have been married for twenty years and have had five children. Three of our children were born the first four years of our married life.

"There were many difficulties in the family. I remember what a hardship our third child was for us. He cried night and day for two years. But little by little we came to realize that he was a real gift of God for us, and that because of the many sacrifices we went through during this time we grew both humanly and spiritually.

"With the many physical difficulties after this child's birth, the doctor said it would be better if I didn't have any more children. But

Paul and Mary Gateshill are a young couple from England. She is Catholic and he is Anglican. They want Christ to be at the center of their lives, and so they go to Communion every day in their respective Churches. This separation is a suffering for them, but they offer it to the Father, so that one day ". . . all may be one . . ." Paul sang a song that he had written for Mary which contained their experience; that is, that their love for one another grows and becomes more beautiful, the more they love God.

we still wanted to remain faithful to the Church's teachings.

"I felt that in doing the will of God in this way, God would take care of everything with his love. I had the certainty that he would give me the graces to live each moment in his will.

"As our love for one another grew through these difficult years, I gradually understood I had to love more: earlier when my husband came home after work, I would rush to him and immediately burden him with all the problems I had had with the children. But then, in my effort to really love him, I began to listen to how his day had gone. Later I was also able to tell him many things that happened that day with the children, but in a completely different way — without placing any burdens on him but only out of love.

"I feel that God cannot be outdone in his generosity. Since we have tried to put him first in our lives, we have experienced a strong awareness of God's presence in our home."

Howard: "I am a carpenter. Because of Rose's health, we had decided, after the birth of our third child, to space out the births of the others, always following the teachings of the Church. I soon realized how unaccustomed I was to the discipline required for that partial abstinence we had decided to practice. And with great surprise, I began to experience a new freedom. I also found many ways to express my love for my children and my wife. I saw that she responded to my love; throughout these years we have become even closer than before, and we've had two more children.

"I've understood even more deeply that matrimony is a path leading towards sanctity, and that society, with its materialistic outlook on life, tries to do away with the fruits that come from having lived well under difficult circumstances — that is to say, with peace, light, freedom and human equilibrium.

"I've understood that the Church, on the other hand, is trying to preserve these values because it is concerned with human development and with the sanctity of married persons."

Mr. and Mrs. Nguyen from Vietnam

The Nguyens have three children. They moved to Brussels many years ago, but in 1975, the husband's work forced him to return to their homeland. As a result of the war, they were then separated for two full years. They were firmly committed to doing the will of God, relying on the graces always present in the sacrament of matrimony which united them.

In fact, Christ himself had said, "What God has united, man must not divide" (Mk. 10:10).

For many months, the wife and children received no news from Paul, but they discovered a new faith in God. They began to pray together more often and to receive the Eucharist more often, too, trying to offer it for Paul, who was, perhaps unable to attend Mass himself.

For his part, Paul could not resign himself to the possibility of never seeing his family again or of having to die. One day, however, he confided to God that he was ready to accept his whole will, whatever it might be, and that he was offering his life for his wife and children and for the building up of a society based on love. The prayers of this couple were answered by God and after two long years, they were reunited.

Marta and Filippo Manzi from Italy

Marta: "We are now expecting our sixth child. Many people think that we must really like to play with children, or that we started off our marriage intending to have a large family. As is obvious, however, when we got married, we didn't know how many children we were to have. We loved each other a lot, and we left it up to God to decide if and when we would have children.

"Today, I view this aspect of our married life with a maturity and responsibility that these very children of mine have helped me to acquire. And it seems to me that there is a

mysterious, yet tangible bond between these children whom I see, care for, and nurture every day and those who are not yet born, who may be here some day.

"It's true that having a large family implies a great deal of work and sacrifice, but I don't want to dwell on this aspect of our life because it is perhaps talked about too much already. I prefer to speak about the positive aspects of our life which are more numerous and more important.

"I will mention only one of these: The openness of children from large families to the world and the people in it, an openness which, from the time they are small, makes them truly sociable, bearers of friendship and cheerfulness. They feel perfectly at home in social situations. My childrens' teachers tell me quite often that they are friendly to everyone and that they know how to make themselves well liked."

Filippo: "My work keeps me away from my family fairly often. When I am home, however, it gives me great joy to take an active part in all that the family is doing. Less than a month from now, our sixth child will be born, and as you can imagine, we talk about this a lot. Our other five children are also eagerly awaiting this event.

My son Luke came with me to purchase a gift to give Marta when the baby is born. Of course, Marta doesn't know anything about it. It's a secret! Our oldest daughter has been practicing dressing the younger children so that she won't have any problem doing the same for the new one when he or she arrives. We also pray together for this new child, and for the Synod too. Several times we have all gone to Church together before school to pray for it.

"The joy our children feel about this new addition to our family also helps us as parents. It makes us more generous.

"At times, Marta and I get into an argument about something, but I've come to understand one thing: we may not always agree about everything, but it's imperative for us to come to some kind of an agreement just the same. It's very bad to argue in front of the children because in doing so, we diminish our parental authority, forcing them to take sides with one or the other of us. So if this does happen, we have to make peace with each other in front of them too. This is our secret."

Pierette and Jacques from Beirut told of their experience during the war. "There was a sense of death everywhere," Jacques said, "many families were resorting to abortion . . . . but we decided to have our fifth child as a hymn to life, entrusting everything to God, who is a Father. A short time ago a little girl was born. Her name is Naila, which means 'gift'."

Leo and Toos Van den Broek from Holland. They have been married for twelve years and have five children, an unusually large number for their country. Their joy was great when the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae" came out shortly after their marriage and confirmed what they thought and lived.

Maria do Carmen Gaspar from Brazil

Maria do Carmen Gaspar is a widow from Brazil: "We had been married for fifteen years and had five children. We had committed ourselves to building our marriage on the basis of the gospel put into practice, that is, on the rock. Our home was filled with joy.

"One Sunday, we went on an outing, as an act of love for some relatives. Before leaving we went to Mass and Communion all together as a family.

"When I saw that the boat where my husband was had capsized, and only two of the three people on board surfaced, I realized that the situation was very serious. Soon I understood that my husband was dead. At that moment one thought invaded my soul: this is the love of God, even if I don't understand. I had put God at the first place in my life, therefore I was not alone. Our children were playing on the beach. All together we gave their father to

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A GREAT WORK OF GOD

CATHERINE OF SIENA

1980 marks the 600th Anniversary of the death of St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church. We would like to offer our readers a panoramic view of her life. Pope John Paul II referred to her as a great work of God.

Hand in hand, the two children were returning home from a visit to their married sister Bonaventura when Stephen became impatient with the slower pace of 6 year old Catherine. He skipped on ahead, only to realize after a few minutes that she was no longer behind him.

"Catherine! Catherine!" he called out, "Hurry up!" But there was no response. Retracing his steps, he soon caught sight of her standing spellbound in the middle of the road. Oblivious to his calls, she was gazing up into the sky high above the Church of St. Dominic. It was only after he had gone back and seized her by the hand that she awakened, as if from a dream.

"Oh, Stephen!" she cried, "if you had seen what I saw you wouldn't have done that!" And turning back to gaze once more into the sky, she burst into tears, because the vision had disappeared.

It was her first mystical experience. Catherine had seen Christ the King robed in papal vestments and seated on a throne. Flanked by the Apostles Peter, Paul, and John, he smiled at the child and raised his hand to bless her. And from that moment on, Catherine was completely his.

Born in Siena on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1347, Catherine was the 24th child of Giacomo and Lapa Benincasa. From her earliest years she was strongly attracted to the things of God. We are told how much she loved to hear the stories of the saints which her father often read to the family on winter evenings. And her main biographer Blessed Raymond of Capua, writes that she made a vow of virginity at only 7 years of age.

The vision Catherine had seen above the Church of St. Dominic had left an indelible mark on the child's soul, and she wanted above all else to belong to that God who had captured her heart. So it came about that one day in 1354 she sought out a quiet corner of the house where no one could overhear her and kneeling down, pronounced an act of consecration to the Virgin Mary, vowing within it to keep her purity intact.

Although she was naturally lively and outgoing, Catherine early on developed a love for solitude because it gave her an opportunity for uninterrupted prayer. Her lively imagination and cheerful disposition made her very popular among the children of Siena. She was a natural leader, in fact, but even as a youth Catherine led those who followed her to God: she first taught her playmates to pray, and then encouraged them to fast and even to perform like her acts of penance which she herself had learned from the lives of the saints.

Catherine's stubborn independence, which would be evident her whole life long, soon caused turmoil in the Benincasa family: Naturally enough, Catherine's parents expected her to follow the lead of their other children and marry at an early age. So, as was the custom in 14th century Italy, they began to prepare her for marriage at the age of 12, encouraging her to pay special attention to her appearance. As pretty and vivacious as she was virtuous, Catherine was sure to attract a good husband.

In order to please her family, Catherine went along with their wishes for a time. But although she dressed in the latest fashion, styled her hair, and wore jewelry, her inner conviction never wavered, she had no intention of getting married. In fact she soon regretted having given in to their demands, fearing that that concession was evidence of her own vanity.

When her parents persisted in trying to find her a husband she cut off the long golden-brown hair which had been her chief beauty. Seeing that it was useless to reason

with their daughter, Giacomo and Lapa resorted to other means. They took away the small bedroom where she had so loved to go and pray and forced her to share a room. In addition, they made her do the servants' work around the house, but none of this affected Catherine's resolution.

It was during this period that Catherine felt drawn to join the Dominican Order. One evening St. Dominic himself appeared to her holding forth the white garb of the order assuring her that one day she too would wear it.

Encouraged by this vision, Catherine went to her family and earnestly told them of the vow of virginity she had made as a child. With unwavering conviction she informed her parents that no matter what they might do to her she would never marry a man because she had given herself to God. Moved to tears by Catherine's words, Giacomo gave her his blessing and from then on the family left her free to follow her calling.

At the age of 18, Catherine was permitted to join the "Mantellate", a lay group affiliated with the Dominican Order. These women wore the Dominican habit but lived in their own homes, serving the poor and the sick under the direction of a prioress.

Catherine spent the next three years in seclusion from the world, devoting herself to prayer and penance in accordance with the spirit of the Dominican rule. While at times she was still favored with visions and divine consolations she was often subjected to severe trials as well. Sometimes it seemed to her that God had abandoned her entirely.

"My Lord, where were you when my heart was assailed by such temptations?" she asked him on one of these occasions.

"My Daughter," he replied, "I was in your heart, fortifying you with my grace."

It was through these trials that Catherine became aware of her complete dependence on God. And in another vision he addressed these words to her: "I am who am, you are she who is not."

In 1368, while Siena was celebrating Carnival and Catherine was praying in her room, Christ ap-

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St. Michael Marie, APSA

Statue of St. Catherine on the Via della Conciliazione which leads to St. Peter's Square in Rome.

GOD WITH US

The love that a Christian bears within himself is different from any other love existing in the world, however noble and beautiful it may be. Herein lies a deep mystery and hidden power that, if made fruitful, can work miracles. It is a love that has a divine origin, God's very own love which he shares with us and which, being engrafted in us, makes us children of God.

This love is the condition for, and the cause of, a reality that cannot be compared with any other: that is, a brotherhood among people which is on a higher level, a supernatural brotherhood.

This brotherhood has an effect which reminds us of Christmas: Christ is born among people as Emmanuel, God with us. In this brotherhood Christians are united in the name of Christ who said: "Where two or more are united in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). It is a kind of brotherhood that can make Christ present among individuals even where the Church meets with obstacles in its ministry. He is spiritually present, of course, but present. It is this brotherhood that can bring Christ among people, into homes, schools, hospitals, factories, offices, into every community or gathering.

The Second Vatican Council stressed this several times: the community united like a family in the name of the Lord enjoys his presence.

Perhaps we Christians do not always realize what an extraordinary possibility we have. By our acknowledging it this Christmas, God will be able to give us the grace to welcome this gift and to make it more fruitful.

In this brotherhood with everyone, everywhere, it is no longer necessary to anxiously think how we can sort out human problems on our own. If we so wish (and it is enough to be united in his name, that is, in him and in the way he wants) Christ is among us and with us — and he is the Almighty One! This gives us hope. Yes, it gives us great hope.

It is necessary that we revive a little in our Christian families, in our Christian groups and movements, and in the activities to which we dedicate our efforts, this unity. We must live the brotherhood that makes Christ present among us and makes us a vital part of the Church. We must openly declare to one another this desire of ours, without any fear, without false modesty.

If Christmas reminds us to what extent God has loved us, and that is, to the point of making himself one of us, it is easy to understand how the logic of his love makes him always want to be a partner in our doings and desirous to live, in a certain way, among us. He wants to share our joys, our sufferings, responsibilities and weariness, above all by giving us a hand as our brother. For him, it is not enough to give himself to us again and again every time we solemnly join together for the celebration of the Eucharist, or to be particularly present in other ways such as in the hierarchy or in his word . . . he wants to be with us always. And all he needs are two or three Christians . . . and they don't even have to be saints! All that is needed are two or more persons of good will who believe in him and especially in his love.

If we do this, there will be an upsurge of living "cells" in the Church which in time, will be able not only to give new life to that part of society immediately surrounding them, but also to very many, to the crowds. They in turn imbued with the spirit of Christ, will be better able to fulfill God's plan for the world, and give a decisive contribution to the peaceful but irreversible thrust toward a better world.

If the historical Christ healed and nourished souls and bodies, Christ, mystically present among his own, will do the same. If the historical Christ asked his Father, before dying, for unity among his disciples, Christ mystically present among Christians, will know how to accomplish it.

CHIARA LUBICH

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peared to her again accompanied by his mother Mary. Taking Catherine's hand, Mary held it up to her Son who placed a ring upon it, taking Catherine as his spouse. This mystical espousal to Christ marked the end of Catherine's years of solitude.

Soon afterwards Christ appeared to her again explaining that love of God is inseparable from love of neighbor and commanding her to carry her love for him out into the world.

So, like the other tertiaries she began to serve as a nurse in homes and hospitals and to care for the destitute of Siena. She sought out those who had been abandoned by everyone else and made them the focus of her apostolic activity. On occasion those whom she served abused her openly and spread scandal about her as well, but in the end all of them were won over by her devotion.

Catherine's public life only intensified her union with God and she was soon surrounded by a group of friends and disciples, (wealthy men and women, poets, politicians, soldiers, priests and lay people) who looked to her for spiritual instruction. She called them "her family" and they in turn called her "mother." Catherine felt that God had sent them to her so that she might lead them to perfection.

It was in order to keep in touch with this "family" that Catherine began to write the letters for which she is today so famous. At first vehicles for spiritual instruction and encouragement, they soon began to touch on public affairs as well.

It was perhaps inevitable that Catherine's growing prominence in Siena would arouse fierce opposition, for she spoke out fearlessly, with the candor and authority of one united to Christ. So it came about that in 1374 she was summoned to give an account of herself before a general chapter of the Dominican Order. The charges which had been made against her were subsequently disproved and she was given the full support of her order. It was at this time that Raymond of Capua was appointed her spiritual director. He soon became not only her director but also her disciple.

Sr. Michael Marie, APSA

St. Dominic Church, Siena. The vision that 6 year old Catherine had seen above the Church of St. Dominic left an indelible mark on her soul. It was her first mystical experience.

In later life he was elected General of the order and thus, largely through her influence on him, Catherine was a major force in Dominican reform.

Catherine could not ignore the mounting social and political tensions in her native Siena. Family feuds, for instance, were commonplace, and Catherine became known as a peacemaker. She succeeded in solving disputes when all others had failed. It is thought that her energetic support for Pope Gregory XI's appeal for another crusade in 1375 was in part motivated by her conviction that the belligerent energies of her countrymen could be put to better use.

Meanwhile her support of that crusade brought her into direct correspondence with the Pope himself.

On April 1 of that year, Catherine received the stigmata in the Church of St. Christine in Pisa. At her request, the wounds were not visible during her lifetime, however, after her death they could be seen clearly.

When the Church imposed an interdict on the city of Florence in 1376, the officials there asked Catherine to travel to Avignon to plead their cause before Pope Gregory. Desiring to do everything possible to restore peace in the Church, Catherine agreed, provided that the officials comply with whatever the Pope might demand for reconciliation. Catherine's effort was in vain, because the Florentines

went back on their word. However, shortly after arriving in Avignon she realized that God had sent her there to do more than work for peace between the Pope and the Florentines.

This was the period described in Church history as the Babylonian Captivity. Since 1305, the popes had resided in Avignon. As a result, the Church was suffering from undue influence from the French monarchs; meanwhile the city of Rome was falling into ruin and there was a tremendous need for Church reform. Outside of France, everyone believed that the first step in reform was to restore the papacy to Rome so that the Church could speak out once more from the independent See of Peter.

Once in Avignon, Catherine met with Pope Gregory and when the subject of his return to Rome was raised she told him simply, "Do as you have promised." It seems that Gregory had made a secret vow to return to Rome. However, he had never revealed it to any human being. Catherine's words supplied the impetus he needed, and on September 13, 1376 he set out for the See of Peter.

In succeeding years, Catherine continued working to bring about peace between the Florentines and the Pope. However she succeeded only during the reign of Gregory's successor.

It was about this time that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Catherine dictated her most celebrated work known as *The Dialogue.* It is a conversation between God and Catherine which has become one of the classics in spiritual writings.

In 1378 the Church was torn by the Great Western Schism which was characterized by two rivals claiming to be the rightful pope. From the first, Catherine sided with Urban VI who had been lawfully elected and at his request she traveled to Rome seeking to obtain for him the recognition that was his due.

She took up residence in that city laboring for over a year, through prayers, exhortations and letters, to reach this end.

Morning after morning she hurried to St. Peter's Basilica where she spent the entire day in fervent prayer for the Church. However, she would not live to see her prayers answered; her life was nearing the end. Catherine became unable to eat or to even swallow water. After losing the use of her legs in February she was confined to bed, and it was there, surrounded by her "family," that she died on April 29, 1380 at the age of 33. Her last prayers were for the spiritual well-being of her "family" and the unity of the Church.

Venerated even in her lifetime as a saint, Catherine was canonized by Pope Pius II in 1461. In 1939 Pope Pius XII declared her and St. Francis of Assisi the chief patron saints of Italy.

On October 4, 1970 Pope Paul VI also declared Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila the first women Doctors of the Church. Citing the reasons for which Catherine was proclaimed Doctor, the Holy Father said in part, ". . . what strikes us most about the Saint is her infused wisdom. That is to say, lucid, profound, and inebriating absorption of the divine truths and the mysteries of the faith contained in the holy Books of the Old and New Testaments. That assimilation was certainly favored by most singular natural gifts, but it was also evidently something prodigious, due to a charism of wisdom from the Holy Spirit, a mystic charism."

Recalling Catherine's efforts to induce the Pope to return to Rome, the Holy Father said, "The success which she finally achieved in this was truly the masterpiece of her work. For centuries it will be remembered as her greatest glory and will constitute a quite special claim to everlasting thankfulness on the part of the Church."

And in conclusion, Pope Paul called to mind Catherine's great love for the Church: "Catherine was not content with having carried out an intense and vast work of truth and goodness in word and writing," he said. "She desired to seal it all with the final offer of her life, for the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. From her deathbed . . . she addressed this moving prayer to the Lord: 'O Eternal God, receive the sacrifice of my life for the mystical body of the Holy Church. I have nothing other to give but what you have given me. Take my heart, therefore, and press it out over the face of this spouse.'

"Let us receive this message," the Holy Father proposed, "in a grateful and generous spirit, that it may be a light for our earthly life and pledge of future secure membership in the Church triumphant in heaven. So may it be!"

On September 14, 1980 Pope John Paul II traveled to Siena where, at a concelebrated mass attended by more than 40,000 people, he celebrated the sixth centenary of St. Catherine's death. "Let us not forget the great works of God," he said in his homily, "St. Catherine of Siena is a great work of God."

(We are grateful to Sr. Jean David Finley, Dominican Convent, Sparkill, N.Y., who contributed some of the material for this article.)

WORD OF LIFE

"Blest is the one
who is not scandalized
by me."
(Matthew 11:6)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"Blest is the one who is not scandalized by me" (Mt. 11:6).

Here is a new "word" of Jesus for you to live. Do you know on what occasion he said it? It was the day when a number of disciples were sent by his forerunner John the Baptist, to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

On that occasion Jesus reminded his questioners what the prophet Isaiah had said centuries before. He had described the time when the Messiah would come, by saying, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; the lame will leap like a stag . . . the good news will be proclaimed to the poor" (Is. 35:5-6).

Now these events were being fulfilled. He was healing many, a sign that the Kingdom of God, announced by Isaiah, was at hand.

With that Jesus gave proof to those who questioned him that he was the one whom John the Baptist and the entire Hebrew world was awaiting. And he concluded:

"Blest is the one who is not scandalized by me."

". . . is not scandalized by me." Don't these words strike you as being exceedingly strong? Do you have any idea of what Jesus meant? Is it possible that we could be scandalized by him?

The fact is that in those times it was possible for this to happen for whoever had a degree of faith in God and nourished some hope in a future Messiah, a hope which was measured by the yardstick of their own desires and their own way of thinking.

They were waiting for a king to ascend the throne of David, a man above all others who would expel the Romans and establish the domination of Israel. He would be a celestial being who would make both heaven and earth tremble. Instead they found themselves faced with a carpenter and they said, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Is Mary not his mother? . . ." "And," the Gospel added, "they would not accept him" (Mt. 13:55).

According to them, the Messiah would come to pronounce sentence on sinners, to threaten that divine justice would prevail, to excommunicate and cast out the impure of every sort.

Instead, Jesus was often with people of low esteem, people he should have avoided so as not to be defiled; he kept company with people who, at that time in his country, were considered to have been punished by God. He drew near to lepers, he ate with sinners, he proclaimed the good news to the poor. Jesus identified himself with the little ones, with the lowly, with those who were looked down upon.

While John the Baptist and the Jews were expecting God's imminent wrath and revenge, Jesus came and went in search of the lost sheep and welcomed the prodigal son.

And it was this way of life of Jesus that dumbfounded the Jews, that was incomprehensible to them. For this lack of understanding he admonished:

"Blest is the one who is not scandalized by me."

The reason was that in those days the essence of God was unknown. His essence is love; and Jesus had come to reveal it. Out of love for us, he made himself one of us. He accepted all the limits of this condition out of love. He mingled with those most in need because he loved them. His words, and the miracles he worked, were especially for them.

But there is more. And, at this point you can understand how the scandal of the Jews reached a climax. Out of love, he let himself be overcome by violence. He wanted to save all of us and share with us the life that is to come and here he found a way to pay for everyone.

This was the scandal of the cross.

Love was always the motivation behind Jesus' every action because, we repeat, God is love.

But the world does not understand this. Without stopping to analyze profoundly Jesus' behavior, without the simplicity needed to grasp the mystery of his presence, the world condemns and passes judgement on God, God made flesh, Jesus.

"Blest is the one who is not scandalized by me."

What does Jesus mean? He wants to assure you that if you believe in him, the one who fulfills the promises announced in the Old Testament, in a manner a bit different from what you might have thought; if you put your total confidence in him even if you cannot always understand; even if your understanding of God and the things of God might be different, you will have an extraordinary experience. You will find the truth, and the plan of God for humanity and for yourself will be revealed to you. You will feel in your heart that you have found happiness and you will experience the depths of the divine life. You will know the secrets and the gifts of his love, and you will be able to say: "blest."

Yes, because:

"Blest is the one who is not scandalized by me."

So how can you live this word of life? Above all, by having a heart filled with gratitude because, in the one life that heaven has given you, you have had the good fortune to know Jesus and therefore the true God.

You must therefore tell him of your great joy, of your happiness for having made your way of life meet and converge with his.

And then as a consequence of all this, become his disciple as he desires, live all his words, and above all go directly to his heart, that wants to make of you another himself — all love for God, all love for the others.

Begin by loving, one by one, every person you meet during your day: Love everything and everyone as Jesus wishes, but fill your heart especially with love for those whom he had favored when he, like you, walked upon this earth.

How much suffering there is on this earth! Open your heart, your hands to soothe wounds, to feed the hungry, to counsel, to teach, to visit the suffering. . . .

This will make you similar to him.

And it will be on love that he will judge you.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Gospel.

HOUSE CALLS

One Friday afternoon I received a phone call from a lady whose husband had done business with the company I work for, before he passed away. She was confused about some investments he had made and had many questions about correspondence he had in his files from companies he had invested in. Finally she asked if I made house calls and she wanted to know if I could go see her and explain the papers she had received. I was a little hesitant at first because the type of advice she was asking for was somewhat different from the type one normally gives in my line of work. Yet, I knew she hadn't been able to get help from anyone else, so I told her I would call her Monday and set a time to meet. After hanging up the phone I was somewhat bothered by the commitment I had made because I realized it would take a couple of hours out of the day and, from a business point of view, did not appear to be productive.

I usually try to read the word of life each morning at work before I start my day and so Monday morning I read the current one "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." When I started into the day's work one of the first things confronting me was the call to the lady. It meant for me to serve her even though it wasn't expected of me by my employer and even though it might require me to give up my time. I made the appointment and went to see her the next day. As it turned out the help I gave her probably could just as easily been given by a friend as it required no special knowledge and the main thing I did was to help her throw away papers she didn't need! Afterwards I realized what an opportunity it was for me to be of service to someone.

M. Z.

SHE WAS STILL CONFUSED

I was on my way to the office a few weeks ago with a busy day ahead of me, several scheduled conferences and court appearances. After entering the lobby of my office building, I got on the elevator and half noticed an elderly woman at the back, with a piece of

wrinkled paper in her hand. She was wearing a beat-up overcoat, heavy shoes and rolled down stockings. She seemed confused. I looked ahead, thinking about my morning schedule. Suddenly she asked me if a certain lawyer was in the building. I didn't recognize the name, so I suggested that she go back down to the lobby of the building and ask one of the lobby guards for help. The elevator stopped at my floor, I got off, her problem conveniently forgotten. But, the elevator had hardly closed, when it hit me like a thunderbolt — "my friend, you just left Jesus on the elevator." I turned quickly but the doors had closed and the elevator was gone. I pushed the elevator down-button quickly and waited in front of the same elevator shaft. In a minute or two, the down light went on, the same elevator stopped. My friend was still on it, holding her wrinkled note. I stepped in and asked to see her note. She handed it to me. The lawyer's address was a different building than ours. She was in the wrong building. I repeated slowly to her, "Go down to the lobby, the guard will give you directions." I thought to myself, "Joe, you have been a good fellow." The elevator continued downward. After a few seconds, she said to me, "Are you in a hurry?" Was she talking to me?

I wanted to get back to my office. I was behind in my work. The elevator arrived at the lobby. We got out together, me with my pin-striped suit and attache case, and my "friend" with her beat-up coat, heavy shoes and rolled down socks. She stayed close to me. I felt that many of the people in the lobby were staring at us. I started to give her directions while still in the lobby. She was still confused. I then suggested we go outside and I would try to point out the building. I started giving her directions again outside the building — "It's down the street, it has a double lobby and there are two banks of elevators for different floors." She looked at me, further puzzled.

Finally, it was clear to me that I had to love to the end. I walked with her until she could actually see the correct building and entrance. I had her identify it carefully. I made sure she recognized it exactly. Only then did I leave her.

Walking back to my office, I realized that Jesus is always around us and I was happy to have recognized him in the beat-up overcoat, heavy shoes and rolled-down stockings.

J. S.

FORGIVING

I received a message from my nephew in prison asking me to visit him right away. The prison is very far from where I live and it takes me about seven hours to reach there by public transit. Since he had asked to see me I knew it had to be important so I went. After traveling the whole day I arrived only to find that visiting hours were over. So I was forced to return home without seeing him. I tried again the next day and fortunately I was able to visit him. When I explained what had happened the day before, he was very unsympathetic. He told me that he wanted to see me to ask for money which he needed for toiletries. He explained that according to the prison rules he had to pay for soap, shampoo, deodorant. I gave him the money immediately. As I was leaving, during a casual conversation with a guard, I discovered that toiletries are provided for the prisoners, but money is required to buy cigarettes. At that moment I felt terrible. My nephew had lied to me. It was bad enough that he only wanted to see me to ask for money, but then to lie about how the money was to be spent. The whole situation was very painful. The word of life we were living at the time was taken from the parable of the prodigal son, "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, this brother of yours was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32).

I knew that with these words Jesus was asking me to love my nephew the way the Father loves him. I could not judge him, nor could I resent being used by him. I had to convert and love him purely without expecting anything in return. This realization brought such a peace that all the heaviness lifted away. And I was able to go home happy.

E.A.

RESEARCH WITH A FRIEND

For one of my classes in school I had to do a research term paper which would count for a great portion of my grade. The paper was to be done in pairs, so my friend and I decided to work on it together.

We met a few times in-between classes to compare notes but we had done only a small part of the work that was needed for it.

We received a day off from school which seemed to be the best day to meet and work on it. My friend had planned to work together with me the whole day. However, just before leaving to meet her I received a call from someone who was in great need of my help that afternoon. I knew that I couldn't let this person down.

When I met my friend at the library and we began to work, I told her that I could only stay for a few hours. She became very upset because she thought that there was no way to do the work needed in those few hours. She started saying different things. I was at a loss for words, because I couldn't explain to ther the situation of the other person and yet I knew I had to go. I felt as if there was a real barrier between us.

Then I remembered the word of life, "All will hate you because of me. . . ." This gave me the strength to go ahead. I wanted to respond with love no matter what she said or did, going beyond the barrier I felt. As we worked I tried to love her by complimenting her on her research information and on the paragraphs she had written.

As time passed she became calmer and began to listen and made comments on the paragraphs that I had written which she thought were good.

When it was time to go, we realized that we had finished almost everything. It was unbelievable! A real change had come about in my friend and she began to share how she had never been this way before. School had made her really hard and competitive. When we parted there was a new rapport between us — and I felt as if she too was starting to change her way of acting. Instead of trying to get ahead of everyone and being the best, she was starting to love.

B.R.

A Diary of Fire

December 1, 1968

If someone does not wish to believe, he is free to do so: God has impressed the seal of his greatness on man making him free. However he teaches us to use this freedom as freedom from evil, not as freedom from what is good. The person who is in God is free to love, that is to live; the one who is against God is free to do evil, that is, to die.

The one who seeks will find. Whoever seeks God, will find him. Whoever listens for him, will hear him. His voice urges us to continually see everyone and everything within the plan of God, which is immortality in beauty, and not according to popular opinion.

Illness can be a torment but if one accepts it in the spirit of the Crucified One, he makes of it a means of purification, and participates in the passion of Christ. We may meet people who are bitter and full of hate, but by seeing them with the eyes of our common Father, we find a brother or sister who needs our help. Some words may offend us, but if we examine them with the light that comes from the Father, we see that they give us an opportunity to suffer and to forgive, and therefore to take a step ahead, a step which otherwise might have required years of reflection.

The Lord shows us the other side of things: the side he sees. Evil is transformed into good, suffering into love, the loneliness of life here on earth into conversations with the angels and the saints, with Mary, with the Trinity.

We become aware that those who do evil and who seem to overpower us, are actually our collaborators, unwittingly contributing to our sanctity. And so ugliness becomes beauty, and every misfortune becomes an opportunity to open ourselves to God's grace. History is like a noisy and dusty mill, grinding out the flour from which bread is made. It is a machine which uses all earthly matter, wars, struggles, epidemics, hatred, along with grain, water, metals and energy, to prepare our approach to the spirit. One can see that all of creation, as it appeared to St. Paul, longs to converge in Christ, where the final grafting between human and divine, heaven and earth, matter and spirit, takes place.

Whoever sees only the negative earthly fleeting side of life — only the here and now of human existence — loses out on the greater realm of life. He becomes a mere object of death, of which men and events become the authors.

Christmas is approaching. For some, this means that cold, shorter days, perhaps hunger is approaching. But for those who are in God it means that the Redemption, which brings joy, life, deification, is on its way.

Christmas is the image of the paradox which the Redemption is for us. It discloses the heavenly Father's way of acting by making of a stable the dwelling place of the Eternal One, the meeting point of purity and beauty. He can cause the God-man to be born in the dwelling place of a poor, worn out old man, a person who is a temple of the Holy Spirit if he wishes, and therefore, a meeting place for angels singing to the universe.

Igino Giordani

Excerpted from: Diario di Fuoco, Citta Nuova Editrice, Rome 1980.

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIVERSE

by Piero Pasolini

On the vast cosmic scale of the universe, there are certain extreme situations in which the normal relationships of energy, position and even "knowability" lose their meaning.

Dear Mr. Pasolini,

After reading some of your articles on astronomy, this question came to me: if I determine that the light coming from a certain celestial body has been shifted toward the red end of the spectrum a certain distance, from this value I can calculate the velocity with which it is travelling away from the earth and therefore its distance from the earth. Let's suppose this celestial body is 1000 light years away. Now, the signal I received took 1000 years to reach me and therefore this information is 1000 years old. The distance I measured is the one the body had 1000 years ago. If this is true, in order to obtain the "actual" distance, do I add the distance covered by the body during the last 1000 years?

The problem you are posing has been one of the most debated issues for the past 60 - 70 years. For this reason my answer will be in the form of an article. I feel it is worthwhile to expand upon this theme, in order to give you an idea of the extent to which this subject is being discussed in scientific circles.

If a moving object, in relation to to an observer, emits energy in the form of waves (sound waves, light waves) the observer receives these waves differently if the object emitting them is coming closer to or is going away from him. This is the well-known "Doppler effect." This explains why the siren of an ambulance is heard at a higher pitch (higher frequency and shorter waves) when it is travelling away from us. This phenomenon always occurs when there is movement between an observer or receiver of waves and an emittor of any of the type of waves, including sound, radio, light, marine waves, etc. .

The police use radio waves to detect the speed of an automobile. In an analogous system, astronomers measure the speed of a star which is moving toward or away from us. Analyzing the light which reaches us, we find that certain characteristic frequencies are lowered if the star is receding, and raised, if the star is approaching. In terms of colors, these situations correspond to these frequencies being shifted toward the red or blue end of the spectrum. This observation alone only serves to tell us relative velocities, not distances.

The Doppler effect can be used indirectly in determining the distances to far away galaxies. During the 1920's, our ideas on the nature of galaxies became clear. We know now that our sun with its system of planets is part of an immense nebula of stars and gas having the shape of a crushed disc rotating around a center: we called this nebula, our galaxy, the "Milky Way."

Many were certain that other nebulae, generally having the shape of a spiral disc, were other galaxies, similar to ours and very distant.This opinion had to be supported by some measure of distance between us and the small nebulae visible in the heavens. Using an ingenious method, the first distance determined was that between us and M31, or Andromeda, which is the closest galaxy to us. The dimensions of our galaxy do not extend beyond one hundred thousand light years. Andromeda was found to be between one and two million light years away and, therefore, definitely out of our galaxy.

Using other indirect, more refined methods, the distance to other, more distant galaxies was measured. At this point something was noticed: the more distant the galaxy, the more the characteristic light frequencies were lowered that is, the greater the light was shifted toward the red end of the spectrum. In scientific terminology, this is referred to as the "red shift."

Hubble, the great American astronomer who first discovered this red shift, felt he had learned something profound about the universe, something that far exceeded the limits of our own galaxy. This mysterious shifting of light frequencies in proportion to the distance revealed a property of our whole universe which was of extreme interest to Hubble in all its aspects.

Lengthy research was undertaken. Finally, it was concluded that the

Andromeda, or M31 - the large galaxy which is closest to us. It is seen as a great flat disc with arms spiraling around the center. It is inclined as seen from earth and therefore appears elliptical. It was the first galaxy for which the distance from us was accurately determined, thus showing that it was as immense galaxy separate and distinct from our Milky Way and twenty other galaxies from a group which together are involved in the expansion of the universe.

"red-shift" of the far distant galaxies had to be caused by the Doppler effect. The galaxies seem to be running away from each other and from us in any direction we observe. The farther away they are the faster they are receding from us.

The conclusion was shocking. The universe of the galaxies is expanding. This does not mean that our galaxy is at the center. You would get the same sensation from any other galaxy no matter where it was located in the universe. A good analogy is to compare the galaxies to raisins in dough that is rising. As the dough expands, each raisin becomes more distant from each other, with those farthest away travelling at the greatest velocity.

After making thousands of very precise measurements, Hubble developed a coefficient, or constant of proportionality, between the amount of the red shift of the galaxy's spectrum and its distance. This is called the Hubble constant. Multiplying this constant by the red shift measured for a certain galaxy yields the distance.

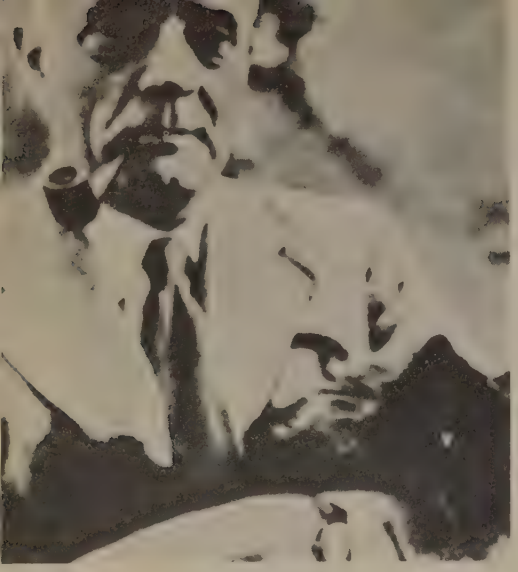
In your letter you applied these calculations to a nearby star. However, as I said previously, the red shift serves only to calculate the distance to a galaxy, or better, a group of galaxies. This expansion involves groups of galaxies. Andromeda does not have a red shift with respect to us because we are in the same group of galaxies. We are participating in a bulk expansion with groups of galaxies expanding with respect to one another.

The flight of these groups of galaxies from each other brings to mind the beginning of this flight, that is, the beginning of the universe. By applying Hubble's constant, going back in time, imagining the cosmic film in reverse, we find that about 15 billion years ago, all the material and energy which today composes the infinite number of galaxies with their stars and planets was in a state of extreme concentration.

Not even modern physics can describe this state of matter in which energy is concentrated in one spot. Perhaps such a description would make no sense because of the fact that here there is a unique situation in the absence of time and space. Time and space emerged at the beginning of the expansion, at the instant of the so-called "big bang," when the evolution of the universe began.

Time and space gave origin to the universe since, according to the theory of Relativity, they are necessary in describing and defining any object in the universe. Time-space define the real and unique reality; energy and mass are expressions of the time-space reality.

Two Nobel prize winners, Penzias and Wilson, demonstrated that the universe as we are now experiencing it, had its beginnings in an event of extremely high energy. This was confirmed when they verified the existence of the phenomenon called "background radiation." While setting up antennas aligning them to receive microwaves, they observed a background "hum" which they could not eliminate. After long hours of study they concluded this



E. P. Hubble, the American astronomer who discovered the boundless world of galaxies in the first decade of this century. He demonstrated that the universe is expanding by studying the light from the galaxies which is shifted toward the red end of the spectrum

"hum" was caused by thermal radiation of a very low temperature, 2.7° above absolute zero, which seemed to be coming from all directions with uniform intensity.

Immediately they realized that they were dealing with the radiant energy that had been freed in the first moment of the "big bang," which is still travelling in space and filling it in every direction. This energy has been calculated to have been initially at billions of degrees in the form of gamma radiation immediately after the "big bang." Then, as it spread through space it was degraded to lower energy with a wave length of 5 to 10 centimeters, corresponding to a thermal radiation of 2.7 degrees absolute. You can imagine the excitement of scientists like Gamow who predicted in the 1930's that if the "big bang" theory were correct, all the energy of that explosion would have to be present in space, diluted and degraded to 2.7 degrees absolute.

Now I come to your letter and the problem you stated. Suppose I measure the red shift of a galaxy and from this I determine that it is moving away at a certain velocity: applying Hubble's constant I conclude that it is, for example, 50 million light years away. I also conclude that it "was" at that distance 50 million years ago since the ray I just received took that long to reach me. Does it make sense to say that "now," in this moment, I can perform the appropriate calculations, assuming the galaxy has continued to travel at about the same velocity for the last 50 million years and determine the galaxy's approximate distance from us today? Described in this way, it seems to be a logical problem. Of course the galaxy would be expected to be further away than calculated, since Hubble noted that galaxies that are further away are travelling at a greater velocity away from us.

There are many problems with this calculation. In our small world I would, at least in principle, have the means to monitor the position of a moving object "now." However, in the dimensions of cosmic space, does this approach make sense? How can I obtain an "actual" distance when it is impossible to monitor the position which the galaxy has "now," since in an absolute way there is no means to do so. What does "actual" or "in reality" mean in this case?

The approach of physicists today is to "say nothing" about situations which are not directly or indirectly observable. A statement that cannot be proven is considered the same as one that does not make sense.

In the example of the galaxy 50 million light years away, there is some basis for considering where it might be "today," since there might in theory be some way for someone to check on its position. However, in the case of galaxies which are ten to fifteen billion light years away, calculations show another situation. Here the velocity in relationship to me would be so great as to cause the degeneration of the time-space relationship. In fifteen billion years these galaxies would be unobservable. As physicists see it, the concept of the existence of something is linked to its degree of observability.

Even the position I've just stated is still debated by physicists. Over fifty years ago Einstein and others argued from the point of view of a deterministic philosophy of physics; that is, arguing that things had to be strictly observable. Those arguing from the point of view of modern quantum physics disagreed. They argued, at least in the infinite small world of sub-atomic particles, that the particles are not observable in an absolute, independent way; but that they are observable only to a certain degree.

The problem becomes acute at this point because many parameters which could define a phenomenon are not observable even "in principle," according to modern quantum mechanics. The sub-atomic world is full of situations which are intrinsically indeterminate since some of the parameters disappear or are altered in the mere process of making a measurement. It is this argument from the field of quantum mechanics which leaves room for a certain freedom in describing our macroscopic world.

As you see, the reply to your question is somewhat problematic. If you are dealing with a star which, cosmically speaking, is a stone's throw away, you can still apply the common calculations: that is, if a star is one thousand light years away and moves with a certain velocity, then you can be reasonably certain that "now" it is in a position where it can be seen within a thousand years.

The situation becomes increasingly less clear for those galaxies which are approaching the limits of our ability to observe them in the universe. Here we are becoming tied, in an absolute sense, to the property of the reality we call "light." As we know from the theory of Relativity, for objects travelling at the speed of light, the space-time relationship is completely altered, and we can say nothing about them. Also we cannot say anything about those galaxies which are about to go beyond the "speed of light" horizon.●

"WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF GOD
IN THE LITTLE THINGS,
DOES SOMETHING GREAT
IN THE EYES OF GOD."

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

The young and the Gospel

At school I take a class called Theater Arts and we were to build a puppet theater. Each person was to contribute some time. In my group there were not too many people giving enough of their time, but instead I was doing my part and also theirs. This made me happy because I knew that they did not know that you should be the first to love. Later when they realized that I was loving them by helping, they thanked me. And really that was all I wanted from them because I was doing it for Jesus.

Pina

I was in school one day looking for something to do because it was a free hour when I saw this girl whom nobody likes playing with a chess game. I went up to her and asked her if she wanted to play. She said she didn't know how. So, seeing Jesus in her, I said, "I will teach you." So after she learned we sat down and had a game.

Steve

We were driving along and I was looking at the beautiful scenery. Then my dad told us that we were going to pray the rosary. I wanted to say later. But I realized that the will of God for me at that moment was to pray the rosary. I thought then that all this nice scenery and buildings will one day pass away but if I do the will of God, that I'm sure won't pass away. I also thought that praying the rosary is special because you're speaking to Mary and also telling her how much you love her. So I prayed.

Editha

One morning, a few days ago, I was upstairs in my room. My father asked me to come downstairs to eat breakfast. I told him that I was making my bed and he said "I wish someone would make my bed for me." So I made it for Jesus in him. Then I went into my room and saw that my sister's bed wasn't made. So I made her's also for Jesus in her. If Jesus was in everyone, which he is, I wouldn't do just one bed, I would do all of them, that's why I did both of them, for Jesus.

Michele

One day I found out my mother would have to go to the hospital to receive some medical treatment for her back. I knew this would be very painful and being close with my mother I felt a certain suffering within. When my mother had gone to the hospital I knew I had to do my best to keep Jesus in the midst with her. At home I tried to do all the housework with love. By loving in this way, I felt suffering turn to joy, because together my mother and I were both working for the kingdom of God.

Chiaretta

I went to a gymnastic camp and everyone in our cabin got to be friends except this one girl. I tried to talk to her and help her because I knew I had to love every one not just the people I knew. I tried to love Jesus in this girl but there was no reaction. This was a big suffering for me but I tried to accept it and kept on loving.

After a few days the girl began to open up and talk to everyone in the cabin. At the end of camp she got an award for this big change. She was very happy and I tried to share her joy. A little after she said to me, "I wouldn't have gotten this award if it wasn't for you because you helped me to open up."

Anne

One day, in school, my friend asked me for a favor. She asked if I would do her homework for her. At first, I was surprised because no one had ever asked me that before. I didn't know what to say to her. If I didn't do it for her, she might get angry with me, and if I did do it, then it would not be the Will of God.

So I told her I would think about it. I knew that it really wouldn't be an act of love to do the "favor" for her because it was not the Will of God, and it wouldn't be love to the teacher, either.

Finally, I went back and told her the truth, that it wasn't right. To my surprise, she said "that's okay!" and she wasn't mad at me. It was really the hundredfold!

Marimel

One day I was reading a very interesting book and my mom told me to go hang out the wash. I waited a couple of minutes to see if she would forget, but she told me again. I still wanted to keep reading but I knew that then I wouldn't be loving Jesus in her so I got up and did it. Right while I was in the middle of the wash she called out and told me to come in and do the dishes. I was getting pretty mad! But I decided that if I wanted to love her all the way to the end I should go in and do the dishes too. So when I was done with the clothes I did the dishes and I was happy.

Lisa

At home together with my sisters we were going to clean up the house. But I planned to fix the whole upstairs myself so I would get all the credit! But then I thought Jesus wouldn't fix the house to get credit! He would fix it so his mother or father wouldn't have to di it! So I still cleaned it without anyone knowing it.

Clara

I was watching a program and my sister wanted to watch something else so I loved her and watched her program.

Paul

(continued from page 11)

God. Taking this step, I experienced that love is stronger than death. My husband is still very much alive and can do even more for us now. Our family, therefore, is still intact. In fact, the children are growing in faith and the love of God, though in the midst of all the difficulties which exist in a one-parent family."

This painful event, however, did not interrupt the apostolate that Maria do Carmen had been doing among many poor families together with her husband.

She continues to work in the "favelas" (slum areas) through different activities in the field of human development. She experiences constantly the fruits of the gospel put into practice.

She mentioned briefly a few activities which are carried out together with others: courses in home economics, reading, writing, etc. She gave the example of a group of families with limited means who have learned to use the natural methods of birth control (instead of the artificial methods used before). Now these families are helping other families to do the same.

Through this service to others, Maria do Carmen has found her place in society, and the joy of a life lived according to the gospel. ●

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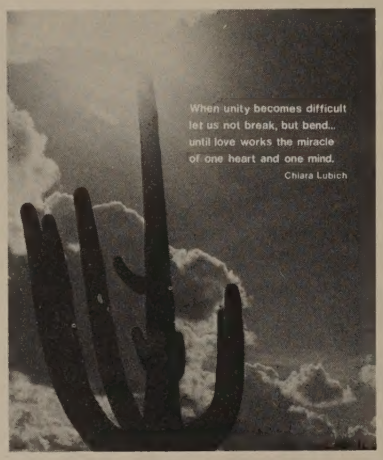
Focolare posters

Two new color posters and two black and white (all four 15" x 18")are now available at all the Focolare Centers, or can be ordered by mail from: Focolare Movement, P.O Box 496, New York, N.Y. 10021.


When unity becomes difficult
let us not break, but bend...
until love works the miracle
of one heart and one mind.
Chiara Lubich

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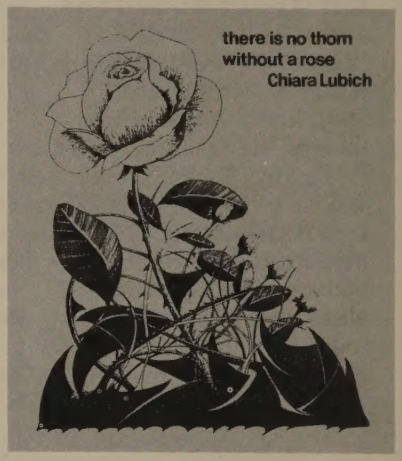

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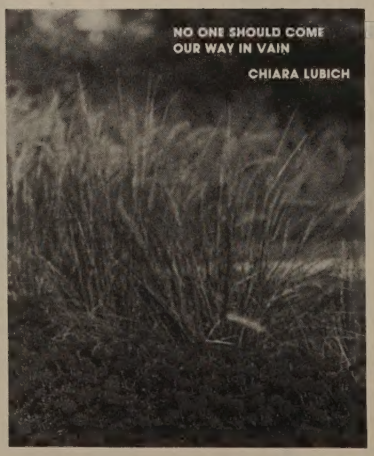

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What is the ocolare Movement?

HE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, th a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total struction of World War II, that God is the only one worth ing for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of eir lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all ay be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, d that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17:). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spon-neously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the ocolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing e Gospel into modern life.

HO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word ire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called ocolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among emselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a y. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, d obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular os and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their milies, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's ocolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same ity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

HE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," ould like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel irit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their pro-ssions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women no are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then ing new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, c.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead the realization of new structures of society.

HE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, omen, and young people of all social conditions who are free of y formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free d willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the ovement and with one another through large or small gatherings, blications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious stitutions, can form part of the Movement too because the ovement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Chris-an religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. so those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted one or another of the Movement's aspects.

EN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another ovement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and e Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age oups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attrac-d by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have mmitted themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The en use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction ey have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the otive for everything they do.

THE MAIN TALKS OF
THE 1980 MARIAPOLIS

Chiara Lubich

WHEN OUR LOVE IS CHARITY

At the beginning of 1980 John Paul II addressed the following words to some members of the Focolare Movement.
"Charity, love comes first of all from God and returns to him, 'God is Love,' says St. John. . . . and also, 'How can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen?' (1Jn. 4:20).
"The Christian vocation, and particularly the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, demands that this truth concerning God and man be put into practice. I encourage you to go deeply into it and live it. . . ."
The Focolare Movement is — as its foundress Chiara Lubich states — a concrete experience of Charity. In this book she speaks about this experience.

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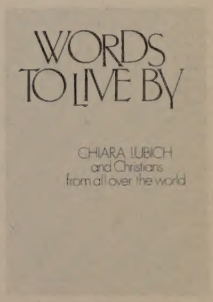
NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!



WORDS TO LIVE BY

Chiara Lubich and Christians from all over the world.

Chiara Lubich is one of those people who have taken the Gospel seriously, discovered the life that is in it, and wished to share it with others. This is the reason why, for over thirty years, the members of the Focolare Movement have chosen a sentence of the Gospel each month and, day after day, have tried to put it into practice.
Now, millions of copies of the "Word of Life" and its commentary are distributed each month and it is lived throughout the whole world, for the Word of God is dynamic and communicative by its very nature. When it is lived, it changes people and transforms the universe.
This is what this book would like to show. It has been written during the course of a whole year. It is drawn straight from life.

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